DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 027 581 CG 003 649

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Forty-five Returnees to Regular High Schools.

Minneapolis Public Schools, Minn. Work Opportunity Center.
Pub Date 1 Mar 68
Note- 16p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.90
Descriptors- *Dropout Attitudes, Dropout Problems, *Dropout Rehabilitation, Dropout Research, *Educational Interest, *Followup Studies, Out of School Youth, School Holding Power, *Vocational Training Centers

The Work Opportunity Center (WOC) is geared to provide occupational skills training, related instruction, counseling, and personal services to youth 16 to 21 years of age. Many of these boys experienced learning difficulties in the traditional school setting and withdrew from school. In addition to providing work orientation, the WOC encourages those with a desire to return to a regular high school for their diploma. This study focuses on a group of 45 dropouts who come to WOC, then returned to other schools. Of the 45, 56% were still in school at the time of the survey, having established better attendance records earlier than the second-time withdrawals, and 77% of the persisters were passing. Over half received positive comments on school adjustment. WOC was seen as helpful in their decision to return, helpful in earning credits, and helpful with personal problems. Those who had withdrawn the second time saw the future as less bright, more uncertain, and felt more general unrest than the persisters. (BP)

ED 017 701

45 RETURNEES TO REGULAR HIGH SCHOOLS

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March 1, 1968

CG 003649

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

The Work Opportunity Center is geared to provide occupational skills training, related instruction, counseling and personal services to youth 16 to 21 years of age. Many of these young people experienced learning difficulties in the traditional academic setting and withdrew from school. They came to the Center confused, unsure of themselves, uncertain of their futures, feeling defeated and frustrated over their progress, discouraged by past failures, and fettered by numerous health and personal problems. Schools and teachers have not been positive experiences for some of them. Most know firsthand the stress placed on a high school diploma in today's job market. In spite of previous disenchantments, they seek a fresh start, clinging to a hope in education as the way toward a better life.

The Work Opportunity Center, in addition to providing work orientation, technical training and guidance, encourages those who possess a desire to return to a regular high school for their diploma. There is opportunity to earn credits through individualized study programs in all technical and related areas, and to receive personal counseling and guidance whatever the problem. To such youth, WOC may serve as a haven during a stormy interim period.

This study focuses on a group of dropouts who came to WOC and then returned to other schools. The question arises, what has happened to these youth? Have they persisted in their efforts to return to the academic mainstream? Have they succeeded in making a better adjustment to the demands of school life? This study seeks at least partial answers to these questions.

First of all, how many were there? By November of 1967, a total of 45 individuals had returned to other schools for the 1967 fall semester. This number represented 15.5% of the average WOC enrollment between June and October, 1967 and 26% of total withdrawals over the same period. The group was composed of 27 boys and 18 girls.

Three of this group had registered, received initial counseling and enrollment orientation but had not attended classes. Three others had attended WOC less than 5 days. Their names were retained in the sample.

A number of specific questions were posed regarding this group of 45 returnees: To which schools did they return? To what grades? What are their ages? How many persisted after the first grading period? What courses did they take, how well did they achieve? How well have they adjusted to the routine of school in their own opinion and in the opinion of their counselors? What attendance pattern did they establish at WOC and at their new school? Do they feel that WOC was any help to them while they were here? How do they feel about their futures?

Methodology

To obtain needed information, a questionnaire was sent to each returnee's counselor at his local high school for data and comments. A different questionnaire was sent to each of the 44 returnees who yet remained in the city (one had moved to an unknown destination). The data which follow, results from a 100% return from the counselors and a 91% return from the 44 youth themselves. The data are presented in a series of tables for clarity and conciseness. A short analysis or summary of highlights appears below most tables.

TABLE 1. RETURNEES AND ENROLLMENT STATISTICS *

	Boys	Girls	Total
1a) Number of returnees	27	18	45
1b) Percent of total returnees	60% **	40%	100%
2a) Average WOC enrollment *	169	122	291
2b) Percent of returnees in the average enrollment	16%	15%	15.5%
3a) WOC withdrawals over this period *	107	63	170
3b) Percent of WOC withdrawals who returned to other schools	25% +	29% +	26%

* Over the 5 month period June 1 to October 31, 1967.

** The proportion of males in the returning group does not differ significantly ($P > .05$) from the proportion of males (61%) in the average WOC enrollment.

+ The difference between these percentages is not statistically significant ($P > .05$).

TABLE 2. CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF RETURNEES

(1) What are the returnees doing now?	N	% of 45
(a) continuing studies at a regular high school	25	56% *
(b) total number who withdrew from high school for the second time *	20	34% *
TOTAL N	45	100%

(2) Early Withdrawal Reasons:	N	% of 20
(a) quit and returned to WOC	7	35%
(b) quit to look for a job or got a job	9	45%
(c) quit and went into military service	2	10%
(d) needed at home	1	5%
(e) moved out of city	1	5%
TOTAL N	20	100%

All withdrew before completion of the semester. A total of four passing grades was earned by three students. The remaining 17 withdrawals did not complete enough work to earn grades in their courses. Most withdrawals expressed dissatisfaction with the rigors of an academic routine, lack of personalized instruction, the competition for grades or the pressures to conform.

* difference is not significant ($P > .05$).

TABLE 3. AGE GROUPINGS

(1) Of Boys and Girls

Age (as of Dec., 1967)	Boys	Girls	Total	%
in their 16th year	2	6	8	18%
in their 17th year	12	10	22	49%
in their 18th year	10	1	11	24%
in their 19th year	3	1	4	9%
TOTAL	27	18	45	100%

Seventeen and eighteen year olds constitute 73% of the returnees. A significantly larger number of 16 year old girls than boys was observed. Also, the number of 17 year old boys was significantly larger than 18 year old girls ($P < .05$).

(2) Of Persisters and Withdrawals

Age	Persister	Withdrawal	Total N	%
16	4	4	8	18%
17	13	9	22	49%
18	5	6	11	24%
19	3	1	4	9%
TOTAL N	25	20	45	100%

The totals in the age categories are distributed as persisters or withdrawals without any significant differences ($X^2 < 3.84$).

TABLE 4. ATTENDANCE AT LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

	Persisters N = 25	Withdrawals N = 8	Total Group N = 33
Mean of Attendance Percentage	76% *	39%	67% +
Median of Attendance Percentage	81%	56%	65%
S.D. of Attendance Percentage	19% **	20%	20%

* Persisters had a significantly better attendance than the early withdrawals (P .05).

** The variability exhibited is essentially identical to the WOC population.

\+ Significantly better than while at WOC (P< .05).

TABLE 5. COURSE GRADES EARNED

			Course Grades					
(1)	Early Withdrawals	N	A	B	C	D	F	Total
	Earned grades	3	3	0	1	2	10	14
	Earned no grades	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	20	7%	-	7%	14%	72%	100%

(2)	Persisters	N	A	B	C	D	F	Total
	Earned Grades	23	3	8	38	27	23	99
	Earned no grades	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	24	3%	8%	38%	27%	23%	99%

- 77% of the Persisters marks were passing grades compared with 30% of the withdrawal group.
- 84% of the early withdrawals earned no grades but only 4% of the persisters failed to do so.
- One persister completed diploma requirements, had graduated, and was employed.

TABLE 6. TONE OF COUNSELOR'S AND TEACHER'S COMMENTS

(1) Comments Regarding Attendance

Tone of Comment	On Persisters N	On Withdrawals N	Total N
Positive	2 (8%)	0	2 (4%)
Neutral	3 (12%)	3 (15%)	6 (13%)
Negative	8 (32%)	10 (50%)	18 (40%)
(No Comment Made)	12 (48%)	7 (35%)	19 (42%)
TOTAL N	25 (100%)	20 (100%)	45 (99%)

(2) Comments Regarding Adjustment to School

Tone of Comment	On Persisters N	On Withdrawals N	Total N
Positive	15 (60%)	0	15 (33%)
Neutral	2 (8%)	0	2 (4%)
Negative	4 (16%)	7 (35%)	11 (24%)
(No Comment Made)	4 (16%)	13 (65%)	17 (38%)
TOTAL N	25 (100%)	20 (100%)	45 (99%)

TABLE 7. SELF-RATINGS ON SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

How well did you get along at x high school?	Persisters		Withdrawals		Total	
1) terrible	2	(9%)	2	(12%)	4	(10%)
2) not so good	1	(4%)	11	(65%)	12	(30%)
3) OK or reasonably well	9	(39%)	4	(23%)	13	(33%)
4) better than expected	7	(30%)	0	--	7	(17%)
5) very, very well	4	(17%)	0	--	4	(10%)
TOTAL N	23	(99%)	17	(100%)	40	(100%)

- 86% of the Persisters rated themselves as getting along at least reasonably well, better than expected or very well as compared to 23% of the withdrawals (difference is significant beyond .001 level).

TABLE 8. INTENTIONS TO OBTAIN DIPLOMA

Do you intend to graduate?	Persisters		Withdrawals		Total	
Yes	17*	(74%)	14**	(82%)	31	(78%)
No	2	(9%)	2	(12%)	4	(10%)
Don't know, or no response	4	(17%)	1	(6%)	5	(12%)
TOTAL N	23	(100%)	17	(100%)	40	(100%)

* One male persister graduated January, 1968.

** 2 mentioned GED tests, 2 mentioned military, and 2 mentioned evening school as ways of earning their diploma.

- Both persisters and withdrawals present similar patterns of intention to graduate.

TABLE 9. POST-SCHOOL PLANS

What do you plan to do when you leave x high school?	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) get a job	6 (26%)	6 (35%)	12 (30%)
2) go into military service	4 (17%)	2 (12%)	6 (15%)
3) go to trade or technical school	6 (26%)	-	6 (15%)
4) go to college or University	6 (26%)	-	6 (15%)
5) come back to W.O.C.	-	7 (41%)	7 (17%)
6) don't know, or undecided	1 (4%)	2 (12%)	3 (8%)
N	23 (100%)	17 (100%)	40 (100%)

- some further schooling is seen in the future of 47% of the total group.

TABLE 10. SELF-RATING ON FUTURE OUTLOOK

Rating Scale	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) dark, gloomy	1 (4%)	1 (6%)	2 (5%)
2) little hazy & uncertain	12 (52%)	13 (77%)	25 (62%)
3) bright	7 (30%)	3 (17%)	10 (25%)
4) very bright & happy	3 (13%)	0	3 (8%)
N	23 (99%)	17 (100%)	40 (100%)

- 43% of the persisters rated their outlooks as bright or very bright as compared to 17% of the withdrawals. ($P < .1$).

TABLE 11A. RETURNEE RATINGS OF WOC "HELPFULNESS" (a)

How helpful was WOC in your decision to return to a regular high school?

Rating Scale	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) no help	2 (9%)	4 (24%)	6 (15%)
2) a little help	7 (30%)	7 (41%)	14 (35%)
3) helpful	11 (48%)	3 (18%)	14 (35%)
4) very helpful	1 (4%)	1 (6%)	2 (5%)
(didn't need help, or, no response)	2 (9%)	2 (11%)	4 (10%)
N	23 (100%)	17 (100%)	40 (100%)

- There are no significant differences between Persister and Withdrawal distributions found in the table ($X^2 < 4$).

TABLE 11B. RETURNEE RATINGS OF WCC'S "HELPFULNESS" (b)

How helpful was WCC in helping you to earn credits?

Rating Scale	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) no help	5 (22%)	3 (18%)	8 (20%)
2) a little help	2 (9%)	3 (18%)	5 (13%)
3) helpful	4 (17%)	0	4 (10%)
4) very helpful	10 (43%)	7 (41%)	17 (42%)
(did not need help, or, no response)	2 (9%)	4 (24%)	6 (15%)
N	23 (100%)	17 (101%)	40 (100%)

- 60% of persisters said WCC was helpful or very helpful in helping them earn credits.

- 20% of combined groups stated WCC was of no help in this regard.

TABLE 11C. RETURNEE RATING OF WOC'S "HELPFULNESS" (c)

How helpful was the Center in helping you with learning technical skills?

Rating Scale	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) no help	5 (22%)	0	5 (13%)
2) a little help	1 (4%)	8 (47%)	9 (20%)
3) helpful	10 (43%)	5 (29%)	15 (38%)
4) very helpful	6 (26%)	2 (12%)	8 (20%)
(did not need help, or, no response)	1 (4%)	2 (12%)	3 (8%)
N	23 (97%)	17 (100%)	40 (99%)

- 73% of the Persisters and 88% of the Withdrawals felt that WOC was at least a little help, helpful or very helpful in their technical-skills learnings.
- The modal rating of "helpful" is significantly larger than those numbers distributed among other ratings.

TABLE 11D. RETURNEES RATING OF WOC'S "HELPFULNESS" (d)

How helpful was the Center in helping you with your personal problems?

Rating Scale	Persisters	Withdrawals	Total
1) no help	3 (13%)	2 (12%)	5 (13%)
2) a little help	6 (26%)	3 (18%)	9 (23%)
3) helpful	4 (17%)	2 (12%)	6 (15%)
4) very helpful	4 (17%)	3 (18%)	7 (18%)
(didn't need help)	6 (26%)	7 (41%)	13 (32%)
N	23 (99%)	17 (101%)	40 (101%)

- approximately one-third did not need help but 56% found WOC a little help, helpful or very helpful with personal problems.

TABLE 12. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO "WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT WOC?"

Responses Mention	Number of Responses: Persisters (N = 23)	Withdrawals (N = 17)	Total (N = 40)
1) Friendly, helpful, or understanding teachers. Individual help or personal interest shown.	11	8	19
2) Flexible program. Could work at own rate. Could attend when convenient.	6	4	10
3) Freedom of movement, fewer restrictions and rules.	10	5	15
4) Had interest in a particular course. Liked the methods, materials, or equipment.	5	5	10
TOTALS	32	22	54

- Of the 54 responses made by the 40 individuals, 35% mention such things as individual help, personal interest, friendly or understanding teachers. Another 28% mention the freedom of movement or fewer restrictions and rules. The remaining comments regard the flexible program, individual rate of progression, or interest in particular courses.

Summary

Twenty-six percent of the June through October withdrawals from WOC returned to a regular high school for a second time. Of these 45 returnees, 60% were boys. They returned to 9 high schools, with the largest numbers to North, Edison and Central. Fifty-six percent were eleventh graders and 31% were tenth graders. About half were 17 years of age, 25% were 18, and 9% were 19 years old.

While at the Center, the boys were not significantly better attenders than the girls. The average WOC attendance pattern of the group was similar to that of the entire WCC student body.

Of the 45 who returned, 25 (56%) still attend. The remaining withdrew to work (45%), to return to WOC (35%), or to go into military service (10%). Many of these again expressed dissatisfaction with their academic experiences. Those who persisted established a significantly better attendance pattern at their local high schools (76%) than the withdrawals (39%). Seventy-seven percent of the persisters grades were passing marks, but 84% of the early withdrawals earned no grades.

The counselors and teachers made positive comments concerning school adjustment on 60% of the persisters and made negative comments on 16%. Although no comment on attendance was received on 48% of the persisters, 32% received negative comments and 8% received positive comments. A large percentage of withdrawals received negative comments on attendance (50%) and on adjustment (35%) by their counselors or teachers.

Three out of four from among both persisters and early withdrawals hope to obtain a diploma. Also in their future plans are jobs (30%),

military service (15%), or more schooling (47%). They largely see the future as "hazy and uncertair" (62%) but a significantly larger proportion of persisters see it as "bright" or "very bright" compared to the withdrawals.

WOC was judged approximately mid-way between "a little help" and "helpful" in their decision to return to high school. Sixty percent of the persisters and 41% of the withdrawals rated WOC as helpful or very helpful in earning credits. Although 1/3 sought no help, 56% felt WOC was either a little help, helpful, or very helpful with their personal problems.

Of 54 open-ended responses received from 40 of the returnees, 35% stated they liked the individual help, personal interest, friendly or understanding teachers. Another 28% mentioned they liked the freedom of movement, or the fewer restrictions and rules. The remaining comments centered around flexibility in attendance, individual rate, or interest in certain courses.

The returnees were encouraged to make further comments regarding themselves, their futures, etc. A number expressed appreciation to the Center for the professional services received. Others indicated their aspirations or individual concerns regarding vocational choices. Generally these comments were favorable as to the type of treatment received and the direction given while at the Center.

The early withdrawals, in their stated reasons for doing so, indicated general unrest, dissatisfaction in their academic situations, and anxiety to do "more real" things. Immediate, short-range goals seems to motivate this group rather than their own perceived long-term needs.